



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA issues emergency rule to protect nursery industry

OLYMPIA – In an effort to protect the nursery industry and plant health in the state, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) today issued an emergency order requiring nursery dealers to temporarily hold trees, shrubs, and woody vines received from out-of-state.

Under the emergency rule, nursery dealers must hold the plant material for one business day after WSDA has been notified of the shipment. During that time, WSDA will review the species, the amount and source of the plant material and determine if a WSDA inspection is necessary. During that 24-hour period, the nursery must keep the plant material separate from other nursery stock.

The reason for the new rule, according to Brad White, WSDA's pest program manager, is the increase of invasive, non-native plant pests and diseases entering the state, particularly the citrus longhorned beetle, Japanese beetle, and the plant pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, which causes sudden oak death.

"The problem has gotten progressively worse in the last three years," White said. "With the beginning of the primary shipping season for nursery stock, the risk of entry for sudden oak death is particularly urgent."

Sudden oak death is a new disease detected in the United States for the first time in 1995 in California. Tens of thousands of trees have been killed in California since then, the vast majority being oaks and tanoaks. Although most of the oak trees native to Washington do not appear to be susceptible to the disease, other plants, such as camellia and rhododendron, are.

Today's action by the WSDA was taken in cooperation with the nursery industry.

"We want to protect the economic well being of the agriculture, forest, horticultural, floricultural, and apiary industries, along with protecting the environmental quality and natural resources of the state," White said.

Under the terms of WSDA's emergency rule, licensed nurseries, which include garden centers at chain stores, some landscape firms, and greenhouses, have two businesses days to notify WSDA of all shipments of trees, shrubs and woody vines from out-of-state or international shipments.

If WSDA does not contact the nursery within one business day after being notified of the shipment, the nursery can sell the plant material to the public.

Nurseries may notify WSDA of shipments received from outside the state by e-mail, fax, personal delivery or mail. Required information includes species of material received, quantity, source of shipment, and contact information for the nursery. Copies of shipping documents are encouraged.

Persons with questions about the rule may contact Tom Wessels, manager of WSDA plant services at (360) 902-1984 or by e-mail at twessels@agr.wa.gov. Persons with questions on WSDA's rule-making process may visit the WSDA web site at www.agr.wa.gov, then click respectively on Plants & Insects, Rule-making Activity, and Nursery Reporting/Hold Period-EMERGENCY RULE. Persons with questions on sudden oak death may visit the WSDA web site at www.agr.wa.gov, then click respectively on Plants & Insects and Plant Diseases.

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